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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/22/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [NU](#)
SUBJECT: NUNCIO: CARDINAL OBANDO Y BRAVO WILL EXERT LITTLE
INFLUENCE ON NICARAGUAN VOTERS

REF: 2005 MANAGUA 2738

Classified By: Ambassador Paul A. Trivelli. Reasons 1.4 (B,D).

¶1. (C) Nuncio Jean Paul Gobel shares our concerns over Cardinal Obando y Bravo's apparent support for Sandinista (FSLN) presidential candidate Daniel Ortega, but he believes Obando y Bravo will hold little sway over Nicaraguan voters. Gobel, who on June 20 advised Ambassador he is perplexed over Obando y Bravo's public proximity with Ortega, insisted that privately Obando y Bravo does not/not support Ortega and is more closely aligned with the Liberal Constitutional party (PLC) and leader Arnoldo Aleman. In Gobel's view, Ortega clearly maintains some sort of hold over Obando y Bravo. (NOTE: Rumors have long suggested that Ortega is blackmailing Obando y Bravo with information proving that the Cardinal fathered children with his secretary and that he has engaged in corrupt practices in his management of the private Catholic University (UNICA). END NOTE.)

¶2. (C) According to Gobel, at this point the Vatican can do little to stem Obando y Bravo's actions. However, Gobel ventured that Obando y Bravo would cross the Vatican's "red line" if he unequivocally endorsed Ortega's candidacy. Faulting the media for "adding fuel to the fire" by according Obando y Bravo's undue attention, Gobel commented that he/the Vatican believe that Nicaraguans will respond more to Archbishop Leopoldo Brenes' measured messages and the Bishops' Conference election statement (possibly to be released in August) than to Obando y Bravo's declarations. The Bishops' Conference will urge Nicaraguans "to exercise their right (to vote) and to use it well," explained Gobel, who added that the message will urge voters to vote their conscience, examine the candidates' platforms, and study the past of each party.

¶3. (C) On the subject of presidential candidates, Gobel asserted that the majority of Nicaraguans still regard the FSLN and the PLC as the only viable parties. He recounted how Aleman recently visited him and announced his decision to withdraw from politics; not convinced, the Nuncio had laughed off the news. As for Eduardo Montealegre, Gobel acknowledged that he appeals to youth, Nicaragua's intellectual class, and urbanites who appreciate his forward-leaning agenda. However, uneducated Nicaraguans and rural voters are less likely to grasp Montealegre's message. To succeed, Montealegre must endeavor to reach these groups, especially in anti-Sandinista areas, suggested Gobel.

¶4. (C) Gobel sought clarification regarding the recent reported detentions of Nicaraguan bishops Jorge Solorzano and

Abelardo Matta upon their entry into the United States. Ambassador explained that, to our knowledge, nothing out of the ordinary had occurred, that Solorzano was fingerprinted, as are many other foreign visitors. He added that the Embassy is still awaiting clarification on Matta's case. (NOTE: We found out subsequently that Matta was delayed for 20 minutes during his last entry due to a fingerprinting anomaly. END NOTE.)

15. (C) COMMENT: We believe Obando y Bravo is close to crossing the Vatican's "red line." We also expect Gobel will report our concerns to the Vatican and he may draw on our message to press the church to consider taking measures against Obando y Bravo if he goes further in his public support of Ortega. END COMMENT.

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